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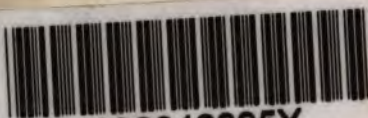
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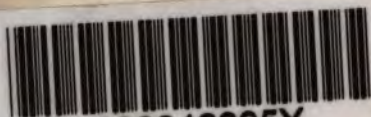
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PASTORAL LETTERS

ADDRESSED TO THE

YOUNGER MEMBERS

OF AN

EPISCOPAL CONGREGATION



BY THE

REV. C. H. TERROT, A.M.

EDINBURGH:

ROBERT GRANT & SON, 82 PRINCE'S STREET.

MDCCCXXXIV.

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PASTORAL LETTERS.

LETTER FIRST.

ON PRACTICAL RELIGION.

MATT. vi. 19, 20.

MY DEAR YOUNG FRIENDS,

THE following pages have been drawn up by one who individually cares for your souls; and who, in his official character, is the messenger whom God hath chosen to communicate to you the knowledge of revealed religion. I intend them as supplementary to the occasional remarks on the most important points of Christian doctrine and duty, which I have laid before you during my course of catechising; and you will find in them sometimes a repetition, and sometimes a continuation, of statements with which you are, or at any rate with which you ought to be, already familiar. And I have begun with the subject of Practical Religion, because no proper effectual attention can be paid

to the *theory* of religion; till there exists in the mind some desire for the *practice* of it. When, therefore, I tell you that the subject upon which I am addressing you is *Practical Religion*, I mean to say, that my desire is to lead you from the consideration of religion as a system of propositions, to the consideration of it as a system of principles and motives. And there is just as much difference between these two methods of viewing religion, as there is between possessing a clear understanding of the terms *honour* and *justice*, and the being practically *honest* and *just*. And as in the relations of human society, the knowledge of virtues, without the sentiment or practice of them, is viewed as utterly worthless and despicable; so in that higher society to which we were admitted at our baptism; in that society whose purpose is holiness, and whose home is heaven, and whose King is the Redeemer; in that society, the knowledge of the most learned theologian is rated as nothing, unless as it is applied to the excitement of religious affections, and the direction of the moral conduct.

Religion, then, is a practical science: or in simpler language, God having revealed to us his will in the Bible, our first duty is to use every means of ascertaining what that will is; and our next, to apply this knowledge to the actual performance of the duties *which we find* to be required of us. So much

is clear from a mere consideration of the Bible as a revelation of God's will towards us, with the announcement of certain rewards and punishments consequent upon obedience or disobedience. But there is another consideration, which may lead us not only to see more clearly the necessity for practical religion, but also to perceive more distinctly what are its real nature and its required extent: and that is the consideration, that our existence here is intended by our Creator as a training, a process of education, tending to fit us for the enjoyment of heaven. And thus God, in Scripture, forbids certain practices and certain tempers, not merely because such is his will, but because indulgence in them would leave our minds in a state of unfitness for heaven: and he enjoins certain duties and affections, because it is only by acting and feeling in such a way, that we can be brought into a state of mind capable of enjoying that particular sort of happiness which God has prepared in heaven for those that love him. You see then, my dear young friends, the grounds of that anxiety which those most interested in your welfare feel respecting your becoming practically religious. They are interested in your advancement in every branch of knowledge which tends to render you honourable, useful, or agreeable among your fellow-mortals, because, in the common course of nature, there will probably be a certain

portion of time, a certain number of years, during which much of your happiness will depend upon the use of those preparatory years which have been devoted to education. And upon the same principle, namely, a deep interest in your future happiness, they are solicitous as to your religious attainments; because they know that your happiness, not for a few years merely, but for an immeasurable eternity, is to be determined by the use you have made of those means of religious instruction, and of that term of life on earth, which it is the intention of our Creator we should use as means to fit us for the enjoyment of heaven.

In my course of catechising, it has been my principal object to instruct you in the *theory* of religion, that is to say, to inform your understandings as to the truths that are really revealed in Scripture; because it is evident that God's will must be *known*, before it can either be *believed* or *obeyed*. But even then, I trust that none of you who paid any attention to the subject, could fall into the error of supposing that mere knowledge was all I wished to instil: even then, as related to morality, you could not but see, that virtues and vices were described, defined, and illustrated, for the purpose, and only for the purpose, of enabling you to *practise* the one and *avoid* the other. And now, it is my earnest desire to impress upon your minds the same

conviction with respect to the articles of Christian belief. With respect to them, knowledge, however necessary, is but a preparatory step; and though it might be strange to speak of *performing* the articles of our creed; yet it is perfectly true and correct to say, that practical religion consists in acting in accordance with a right belief of the Gospel revelation. And as *honesty* does not consist in knowing precisely what is my own, and what is my neighbour's; nor yet in admitting as a certain truth, that it is the will of God I should abstain from all unauthorised use of that which is another's; but in a moving principle of action, a disposition and affection of the mind, directly prompting me to such an abstinence: so neither does that religion which is well-pleasing in God's sight, and available to the securing of our eternal welfare, consist in admitting or maintaining as truths, the facts that Christ made an atonement for the sins of all mankind, that holiness is essential for admittance into heaven, and that it is attainable only by the aid of the Holy Spirit; but it consists in acting, externally and internally, in thought word and deed, as if we believed these things to be true.

I trust I have now succeeded in conveying to your minds a general notion of what I mean by *Practical Religion*, and a conviction, that if you would be happy, you must be practically

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not your state infinitely and incalculably more miserable, if, while approaching the transition from time to eternity, the moment when all worldly possessions, knowledge, and accomplishments, will cease to retain the slightest value or utility, you remain totally occupied and satisfied with them, and totally unfurnished with those qualities of mind, and habits of action, which are indispensable to the enjoyment of Heaven.

The acquisition of these qualities and habits, is that *laying up of treasure in Heaven*; recommended by our Saviour as the highest exercise of practical wisdom. He did not mean to recommend the accumulation of a certain number of detached acts of virtue, in return for, and in payment of which, a certain portion of heavenly happiness is to be expected. Acts of virtue, however numerous, could never *merit* an eternal reward, because, at best they are finite and imperfect; nor could they *fit* for the reception of a gratuitous happiness, unless they sprung from a constitution of mind, a turn of thinking and of feeling, in accordance with the occupations of the inhabitants of Heaven. He therefore *is rich towards God*, and *has laid up treasure in Heaven*, who knowing, as far as it can be known, what is the nature of that future happiness which God has prepared for his servants, has, by a grateful acceptance of the gospel of salvation, acquired a right of admission to it; and who, by the aid

of the Holy Spirit, has arrived at such a state of opinions, tastes, and feelings, as to be prepared for the enjoyment of it.

I have said that detached acts of virtue are not the *treasure in Heaven*; but do not misunderstand me, to mean that external acts are not to be taken into the account in estimating our religious state. In judging of another man, it is of course by his actions alone that we can form any notion of his internal character; and in judging ourselves, we can be sure that our love to God, the essential principle of religion, is true and genuine, only when we find experimentally that it impels us, and enables us to do the things which he commands us.

And now having at some length, but I trust neither at a wearisome nor unnecessary length, pointed out to you the necessity and general character of practical religion, I would next proceed to consider the practical application of some important doctrine, the theory and scriptural evidences of which have been already considered during our course of catechising. Let us take, for example, the primary doctrine, not of Christianity merely, but of all true religion, that there is one God, the Father Almighty, Maker of Heaven and Earth. This is a truth, belief in which is antecedent to a belief in Scripture. We admit the assertion unhesitatingly and almost instinctively, *as soon as* it presented to our minds, and as

soon as we can form a tolerable idea of the terms in which it is conveyed ; not on the authority of the universal consent of the human race, for of that consent we cannot be aware till we have advanced much further in knowledge ; nor on the authority of scripture, because scripture can have no authority except over those who believe that there is a God, and that the Bible is his word ; but we believe it on the evidence of all those mighty results of power, contrivance, wisdom, and beneficence, which we feel within us, and perceive around us. On this fundamental point, belief assumes the steadiness and certainty of knowledge ; and a well-ordered mind no more doubts that the world was created by God, than it doubts that the pyramids of Egypt were erected by the agency of man. Here, then, there seems nothing wanting in the theory of religion ; we all believe that there is a God, and that he is not merely the Creator, but also the moral governor of the world,—“ that He is, and that He is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him.” But now let us consider for a moment what is the right corresponding practice ; or rather, since that is too clear to require any explanation, let us consider how far our practice, that is to say, the habitual state of our affections and acts corresponds with this first article of our belief.

We believe, then, that God hath forbidden certain practices, and declared that his wrath

abides upon the doers of them; we believe him at the same time to be Almighty, having the power to destroy both body and soul in hell; and yet there is probably not a single human being who has not, on many occasions, ventured to incur God's wrath for the sake of some transitory gratification. In our belief of God, we include the notion of Omnipresence, and hold that "all things are naked and open to the eyes of Him with whom we have to do;" and yet, while the presence of the most insignificant of mortals deters men from doing whatever is reckoned wrong or unbecoming, the presence of God is in practice forgotten; and under the influence of temptation, that is, just in the cases where belief ought to act in all its vigour, there is a lamentable prevalence of that most fatal folly, "the saying in the heart that there is no God." Of his own great deficiency in this matter, of the sad want of agreement between the convictions of his understanding, and the determinations of his will, between his faith and his practice, every one must be aware, who has paid any conscientious attention to his own religious state.

But you will naturally ask, and God grant that you may ask with a real and a deep interest in the answer, what is the remedy for this deficiency in the very root of all religion? If the fullest conviction of my understanding, upon a point affecting my own highest interests, does

not act as a sufficient motive in leading me to the performance of my duty, where is it possible, in the nature of things, that I can find one? Humanly speaking, that is, speaking of human means, and of that which you can do for yourselves, the remedy lies in tasking your minds to the consideration of this great truth, the Omnipresence and Omniscience of God. You cannot of yourselves bring this truth to bear when it is immediately needed, but you may certainly render it much more familiar to your minds, and therefore more likely to occur in the hour of need than it now is.

And this seems a proper place for reminding you, that the imagination, which must operate very importantly for good or for evil on the eternal fate of every human soul, is in a very great degree under the direction of the will; and as far as it is so, we are, of course, accountable for its exercise. Now we may, if we will, habitually indulge in a train of ideas absolutely sinful; or stopping short of this, we may devote those portions of time which are neither engaged in business nor external amusement, to such frivolous imaginations, as weaken rather than strengthen the moral powers, and lay the mind open to the attacks of every temptation. But on the other hand, we can, if we will, call to mind that in our most retired privacy, God is present — that “He is about our path and about our bed,” and that “all things are naked and open unto

guilty before God. But then, in our natural strength, we shall do this vainly, and unsuccessfully; and every one who has attempted it will either give up the attempt in despair, or else have recourse to that aid of the Holy Spirit, which can alone strengthen our wishes into good resolutions, and direct our goings in His paths, so that our lips do not fail."

Practical religion, therefore, in regard to the first article of the creed, consists in keeping the ideas of God's presence, knowledge, and power, as familiar as possible to the mind; and trying honestly, and presently, that they may be effectual in directing not merely our actions, for which

can scarcely be any *intellectual* error as to its practical application ; and supposing a doctrine to be seen clearly and believed truly, there can be little difficulty in determining precisely what is the line of conduct which accords with it. You may indeed be led to suppose that there is more difficulty than I allow, by observing that, even among those whose religious theory is the same, there is considerable difference in its application to practice, and that the charges of unnecessary rigour, and of sinful compliance with worldly usages, are reciprocally objected by parties who profess an entire accordance as to all the weightier matters of Christian doctrine. This difference of practice may, and indeed must tend to fill the mind of the young Christian with doubts and difficulties, and I shall therefore conclude this letter with a few remarks on its apparent origin, and the light in which it ought to be considered.

There are then two moral questions that may be put respecting any proposed act or course of action: it may be enquired whether the action be *lawful* or *unlawful*, and it may be inquired whether it be *expedient* or *inexpedient*: and that the Christian ought to consider these as separate questions, is clear from the distinction made by St. Paul, "all things are lawful for me, but all things are not expedient." We judge of the lawfulness or unlawfulness of an act upon general prin-

exercise of power in the Magistrat
own time. (Rom. xiii. 4.) Wherev
here exists a difference of opinion a
awfulness or unlawfulness of any a
must exist a previous difference as t
erpretation of some text of scripture.
differences which I wish now to consid
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a person, who, while possessing many useful and agreeable qualities, is known to hold infidel opinions as to religion, or loose sentiments with respect to morals: and the question is, can I, consistently with my duty, contract or keep up an intimacy with such a person? Lawfulness or unlawfulness are here manifestly out of the question, which is one entirely of expediency; keeping in view, however, that Christian "charity seeketh not her own" exclusively, and that the expediency here spoken of is the spiritual improvement of ourselves and of those who come within the sphere of our action. Is it then expedient for the Christian to seek the society of the person described? That depends upon the circumstances and character of the Christian. If he be advanced in years, and matured both in the knowledge and practice of religion, it may probably be expedient for him to do that which would be very inexpedient for the weaker mind and unsteady principles of a less matured and less experienced Christian; in the former case, the probability might strongly incline to the improvement of the irreligious mind; in the latter, as strongly to the corruption of the religious one.

Questions of moral expediency arise to the conscientious mind of a young Christian, most frequently in the disposal of those portions of time which are left entirely to his own discretion, and in the choice of relaxations

land amusements. Here there exists a wide difference of opinion, and a large class of religionists loudly pronounce the absolute sinfulness of almost all the popular amusements both of the higher and lower classes of society. But I trust, that from what I have already said, you will perceive, that even where they totally fail in proving this sinfulness, still the important question of expediency remains to be settled by every conscientious Christian in his own individual case. Now, a conscientious Christian is not necessarily gloomy or unsocial ; but he is necessarily, and as far as his natural character will admit of it, sober and reflecting ; he knows that he has high interests at stake, and that his use of time is influential upon his prospects for eternity. And if you, my young friends, settle the choice and the measure of your amusements with this sentiment of practical religion active in your minds, there is, I believe, little danger of your being misled. If, on the contrary, you are practically indifferent to the religious improvement of your hearts, and look only to positive prohibitions and penalties ; you will, by fostering your natural taste for frivolous society and trifling amusements, increase your natural unfitness for heaven, and thus frustrate the one great purpose for which a beneficent Creator sent you into this state of trial and probation.

I have now done. You will not think that

I have dwelt too long upon the subject of *Practical Religion*, now you see what is meant by the expression. If you use rightly the intellectual powers, and the means of improving them, with which God has blessed you, you will study many a treatise upon the practical application of science, far longer, and far more difficult than that which I now offer to your attention. But whether it relate to the system of the material universe, or the political relations of society, to the powers of the human mind, or the structure of the human body, it relates to a subject which is as dust in the balance, in comparison with the subject of this letter. The more you know of such matters the better ; but it is possible to be totally ignorant of them, and still to be happy ; but *Practical Religion* is the one thing needful for the happiness of your eternal existence ; and that God may give you grace to choose, and to hold fast this better part, is the wish and prayer of your faithful Friend and Pastor,

C. H. TERROT.

ACTS viii. 14-17.—xix. 1-7. HEBR. v. 12.

CONFIRMATION, as it is now practised in the Protestant Episcopal Church in this country, is a religious ceremony, in which those who have been baptised during infancy, and are now capable of understanding the meaning of the covenant into which they then entered, appear before the assembled church, to ratify and confirm the promise and covenant originally entered into in their name. On the other hand, the Church of Christ, by laying on of hands, and accepting their declaration and admissions, joins in prayer to Almighty God, for the strengthening of their faith, and through the

enumerated, you will perceive, that in the apostolic age, the laying on of the apostles' hands, wherever it could be had, followed the sacrament of baptism, and was accompanied by a peculiar action of the Spirit in the communication of supernatural gifts. But the texts referred to, from the Epistle to the Hebrews, appear to shew, that the blessing which accompanied the laying on of the apostles' hands, was something more important to the individual, and more spiritual in its nature, than those miraculous powers which were conferred on the Church in its first age, merely as an evidence of the truth of its doctrines. For we find that the apostle joins it with baptism, and describes them as being equally important, and as standing equally among "the first principles of the oracles of God." It seems therefore rational to conclude, that the Spirit, as conveyed by the imposition of hands, not merely gave miraculous powers, but also strengthened and confirmed the penitence and the faith which had rendered the person on whom it acted, a fit subject for the previous sacrament of baptism; for, on no other supposition could it bear any analogy to baptism, or be fairly put on a footing of equality with it. And this view is confirmed by the indisputable fact, that the Church, in the age immediately succeeding that of the apostles, and when the miraculous gifts had confessedly ceased, still practiced the imposition of hands,

and considered it as a continuation of the apostolic usage.

A detailed enquiry into the evidence of the Christian Fathers on this subject, would, however, be quite out of place here; it will be more to the purpose, if I proceed at once to lay before you the manifest expediency of Confirmation, and then endeavour to show how you may best use it to your own eternal advantage.

In Baptism, you were admitted as members of that society which Christ founded upon earth, to be a school for forming the members of a higher society hereafter to be instituted in Heaven. That Christ did not only reveal a certain system of doctrine, but did also institute a visible Church upon earth, a religious society, with a particular right of admission, particular conditions of continuance, and with different officers for its government; that is to say, distinguished by every thing requisite to constitute a separate association or society, is in my opinion equally true and important; but I shall postpone a more particular inquiry into this fact, until I come to address you on the institution of the CHURCH. In the mean time, taking for granted that there was from the day of Pentecost, and ever has continued, a visible Church of Christ upon earth, consisting of all those who have been baptized according to Christ's ordinance, in the name of *the Father*, and of the Son, and of the Holy

Ghost ; and considering that you were admitted into this society during your earliest infancy, long before you could understand any thing of the conditions under which you were placed, or the privileges to which you were admitted ; it will not be difficult to shew the expediency, and, I might almost say, the necessity, either of confirmation, or of some equivalent rite.

The Church into which you were admitted at your baptism, has provided, that as soon as you are capable of understanding them, you shall be instructed in all the conditions of the Christian covenant ; and after having allowed a reasonable time for the acquisition of this knowledge, nothing can be more reasonable than that she should call upon you to declare whether you consider the covenant as a beneficial one, and are willing to abide by its conditions. It is also reasonable, that if any baptized persons, arrived at the years of discretion, should refuse to make such a renewal of their baptismal vow, then the Church should withhold from them admission to the higher privileges of Christian communion. For, as the Church is a society founded for the promotion of a particular quality, *Holiness* ; the person who refuses to declare that he desires to attain this quality, or who refuses to declare his agreement with the Church, as to the means by which it may be attained, ought not to be treated as a Christian brother, and is mani-

festly unfit for the society of Christ's faithful people upon earth. Confirmation is therefore necessary, as a precautionary measure on the part of the Church. But I am desirous rather of pointing out to you its expediency to the person confirmed; of shewing why you all have reason to be thankful that you have been, or will be shortly, invited to the ordinance of confirmation. And the expediency lies in this, that at a most important crisis of life; at a time when most of you must become the independent directors of your own conduct, in a much greater degree than during the years of childhood; at a crisis when in fact you must make a choice between the contending principles of good and evil, each claiming your service; and when the choice of evil is suggested to you by the prevalent maxims and practices of an ungodly world, and finds a ready advocate in the weakness and sinfulness of your own fallen nature; then the Church, as a faithful guardain of your spiritual interests, steps in, and reminds you of the importance of your choice, and of the excellence and blessedness of that alternative, which, but for her, you might have been left to forget, or induced to dislike and to reject. Such is the charitable and parental intention of the Church in inviting you to the ordinance of confirmation, and requiring of her ministers that they shall, to the utmost of their abilities, communicate to you the knowledge requisite for your

direction, and excite in you the disposition to to use your knowledge to its proper purpose. Such is the intention of the Church; and therefore, when I address you on this, and on other matters relative to your highest interests, I trust you will consider me, not as a mere private wellwisher, much less as an unauthorized intruder into matters in which I have no concern; but rather as an official messenger, sent to you by the Church, and by Him who is the Head of the Church, with a communication of the deepest importance to your eternal welfare. And if this, which is the true view of the character in which I address you, should lead you to suppose that at any time I am not expressing my own sentiments and feelings, but merely acting an official part; though in thinking thus you may do me less than justice, still I would say, put my sentiments and feelings totally out of the question. When a king sends a herald to declare his will, it may be wise to scrutinize the mission of the herald, and to ascertain that he conveys accurately the message committed to him; but that being ascertained, his own sentiments on the subject can be of no importance whatever. Consider me then as Christ's minister; not indeed empowered, like the prophets and apostles, to communicate truths which there is no possibility of your otherwise learning; but commissioned to inform you of truths, which, though they exist in the revealed word

herence to the conditions of the baptismal covenant.

At your baptism, it was promised to me, that you should renounce every tradition that arrays itself against the authority of Jehovah; that you should believe all the revelations, and that you should obey all the commandments of God: and this promise is now invited to ratify and confirm all the persons. But do not, I beseech you, imagine, that by complying with this promise, you impose upon yourselves an obligation and an accountability which it is not in your interest, and which it is not in your power to avoid. In such a supposition there are two great errors. The first error is in viewing the baptismal covenant, as being on the same level with all human covenants, one of reciprocal advantage; and in doubting whether the

sites indispensable in the very nature of things. For as the blessing of external peace and tranquillity cannot possibly be enjoyed by the man of violent, irritable, and unkindly passions; so neither can the state of happiness prepared for God's redeemed people be enjoyed by any but those whose hearts have on earth been disciplined into harmony with the holiness of its delights. The other error to which I have alluded, is that of supposing, that by ratifying the promise of baptism, you create an obligation which did not previously exist. Of course, by promising solemnly, and in the especial presence of God, that you will do that which you have neither the intention nor the desire of doing, you would shew a most lamentable contempt for the power and justice of the Almighty, and would add to all your other sins, that of gross hypocritical falsehood. But every obligation contained in the baptismal vow existed, so soon as the facts and truths to which it relates, together with the evidence for their reality, were presented to your minds. So soon as you could form any distinct notion of what was meant by the word GOD, you were under the obligation to make His will the supreme guide of your conduct, and to resist and renounce, as an impious and destructive usurpation, the influence of every opposing being or principle. So soon as you had a general notion why the Church receives the book which we call the

BIBLE, as a revelation sent from God, so soon was it your duty to study it with earnest care and attention, to believe every thing which it announced, and to do every thing which it commanded you : and consequently, the confirmation of the baptismal vow, no more creates the obligation to lead a religious life, than a promise now made to respect and obey your parents, would create the obligation to filial obedience.

But if confirmation does not create the obligation, where, you may ask, is its practical utility ? I have already mentioned, that at a most important crisis of life, it brings before you, faithfully and strongly, the real state of the relation in which you stand to your Creator, and the connexion of time with eternity ; it reminds you that you are subject to deep responsibilities, that you are by covenant the possessors of glorious privileges ; and it reminds you of these things, just at the period of life when you are naturally most apt to forget them, and when their presence and action is most necessary to meet the increased temptations to which you are about to be exposed. And the Church, in inviting you to confirmation, reminds you of these important interests, with a weight of authority which could attend no exhortation from any individual, however worthy of your affection and respect. She speaks with the dignity of a *great society*, acting through certain appointed *officers*, to whom she delegates the duty, not

merely of inviting, but also of preparing you for the ordinance; and of ascertaining, as far as one human mind can ascertain the state of another, your fitness for a full admission to the use of all the means of grace. And to increase the solemnity of her intervention, she employs her highest officer to receive your declaration of faith and pious intention: and that portion of the Church with which you are more immediately connected, assembles to witness your profession, and to join with you in solemn and united prayer for a blessing on the ordinance, and for the aid of God's Holy Spirit to enable you to lead the rest of your life in accordance with the intentions which you have expressed before the altar of your God.

Here, then, is the manifest utility of confirmation, as it exists and is practised among us at the present day. Either you reject, or you comply with, the invitation of the Church. If you reject it, then the use of the public solemnity is to force upon your consideration that you are acting contrary to the practice of the Church of Christ; and are not neglecting, but refusing an invitation, which both those who have studied the subject most deeply, and those who are by nature most interested in your welfare, concur in earnestly desiring that you should accept. You see yourselves, as it were, openly falling out of the ranks of Christ's army, and cut off by your own act of secession from the benefits,

whatever they may be, which are to be expected from union with Him who is the origin and root of all spiritual life, the author and giver of eternal life and happiness. If, on the contrary, you comply with the invitation, then the use of confirmation as to you is—*1st*, That it introduces you to a higher and more precise course of religious instruction than you would otherwise have been subjected to: *2d*, That it presses upon you the duty and necessity of examining the state of your own hearts and consciences as to a definite and precise object: and *3dly*, That it urges upon you the necessity and the utility, both of public and social prayer, as the instrument whereby all the riches of the divine blessing are procurable for men. And the peculiar advantage of the ceremony is, that while it urges these most important points upon your consideration, it does not leave them to be brought into practical application at some indefinite future period; it does not allow of their postponement to some more convenient opportunity; but, telling you in God's name, that *now* is the accepted time, that *now* is the day of salvation; it affords you at once an opportunity of realizing your good resolutions, and of beginning at once that course of life, which you profess, at least, to believe the only one which can lead to security and to happiness.

But in speaking of the uses and purposes of confirmation, I would pray you to keep in

mind, that it, like every other religious rite, and means of grace, can be of no practical utility, unless as it is applied by the will of each individual to his own spiritual improvement: and this being the case, I must now offer you a few heads of advice as to your *Preparation for Confirmation*.

The young Christian's preparation for confirmation consists of two parts; there is the preparation of the understanding, and there is the preparation of the dispositions. Every one of you to whom I am now writing, has had ample opportunity for attaining the first branch of preparation. Not only have you from childhood been able to read "that word of God which is able to make you wise unto salvation;" and been in the habit of hearing it explained and enforced by Ministers set apart for that purpose; but you have been placed under a course of elementary and progressive instruction, in which all the fundamental doctrines and duties of revealed religion have been stated, explained, and proved. If, therefore, any of you are conscious of gross ignorance, or indistinctness of ideas, as to any of the matters which you find referred to in the service for confirmation, you must be aware that your ignorance is not merely your misfortune, but your sin. Be thankful that it is not yet too late to redeem, in some measure, the time that has been lost; that the

Bible is still open to your perusal, and that the Ministers of God's word are still desirous to lend you their best assistance, and to lay again in your minds that elementary foundation, upon which, had you duly co-operated, they might now have been building the proper superstructure of Christian exhortation. Some such cases of extreme ignorance may unhappily exist; but I am assured that they are exceptions, and that the mere *knowledge* required for confirmation, has, by the degree of attention which you have paid to the courses of catechetical instruction, become familiar to the great majority of those to whom, and for whom, I am now writing.

I pass then at once to the preparation of the dispositions. I shall suppose that you are desirous of complying with the invitation of the Church; that you are well aware of, and believe with the understanding, all the fundamental doctrines of Christianity; and that you have a real desire to know how you may best bring your mind into such a frame, as will enable you to derive from confirmation the benefits it is intended to convey: and upon these suppositions, I shall now offer you such counsels as appear to me calculated to satisfy this desire, and to turn the speculative knowledge of religion which you possess, to its proper practical application.

First, then, let me advise you to read *carefully that baptismal service* which was read

over you, when, as unconscious infants, you were admitted into the body of Christ's Church; and consider with particular attention the privileges to which you were admitted, and the promises that were entered into on your behalf. Remember that the privileges were, admission to be a member of Christ, a child of God, and an inheritor of the kingdom of Heaven; that is, you were made subjects of Christ's preparatory kingdom upon earth, in order to be made meet partakers of his final and eternal kingdom of glory. And you promised, as his subjects, that you would renounce the devil and all his works, the allurements of an ungodly world, and the sinful propensities of your own fallen nature; that you would believe, thereby of course implying, that you would examine and study, all the articles of the Christian faith; and finally, that you would keep God's commandments, and walk in the same all the days of your life. And with respect to these two great points, your Christian privilege, and your Christian obligation, I would have you to bear in mind, that you cannot avail yourselves of the one, and perform the other, unless you always consider them in their proper and necessary connexion. For instance, if you think that you possess the slightest claim upon God's approbation, or the slightest reason to hope for future happiness, merely upon the ground of having been dedicated to God in baptism;

and the claim to the assistance of the Holy Spirit ; in that case, your labour will be wholly unavailing, and you must at length give up the attempt in despair, and resort to the only method by which you possibly obtain success, namely, the application of your *privileges* to the performance of your *promises*.

In conjunction with this careful attention of the baptismal covenant, I earnestly advise you now to begin, if you have not already begun, that methodical exercise of practical religion, the fruits of which will be the peace and comfort of your own hearts. And first, examine your own past and present state, in relation to your *privileges* and *promises* just mentioned. Consider whether you have ever read and understood your own minds what it is that

be not judged of the Lord." And if, my dear young friends, the result of such a self-examination should be a discovery that you have done the things which you ought not to have done, and left undone the things which you ought to have done, and that there is spiritually no health in you ; that in fact, your promises have been forgotten, your privileges neglected ; in that case, consider first the great danger of God's wrath and condemnation in which you have been standing, and in which, as it appears, you now stand. "Baptism," as we are told by the Apostle, "doth now save us : not the putting away of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience towards God, by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead." Now, you evidently want the answer of a good conscience ; what, then, can you conclude, but that your baptism doth not now save you ; that you are not now, by virtue of it, in a state of salvation : and Oh, my young friends, may God forbid that you should be so far hardened by the deceitfulness of sin, as to contemplate without deep alarm, the certainty, or even the possibility, that you are not in a state of salvation. And if you are alarmed at a view of your danger, then flee to the hope set before you in the Gospel ; and thankfully avail yourselves of the door of admission into the ark of Christ's Church, which now lies open to you in confirmation. If alarm at the state in which your

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mised to all those that repent them truly of their former sins; and there, when disheartened by a consciousness of your own weakness and inability to do that which is good, pray for that assistance of the Holy Spirit, which is never refused to those who really purpose to lead a new life.

Lastly, Accompany these exercises with a regular and careful reading of the Scriptures. I do not know that in this matter it is expedient to send you to the Old Testament for examples of vows and personal dedications to God; I would rather direct you to those portions of the New Testament which most distinctly announce the nature and conditions of the covenant of grace, and of that morality which Christ requires from his redeemed people. And as doing this, I would particularly recommend for careful perusal the fifth, sixth, and seventh chapters of *St. Matthew*, commonly called the Sermon on the Mount; the fourteenth, fifteenth, sixteenth, and seventeenth chapters of *St. John's Gospel*, containing the last address of our Lord to his apostles previous to his crucifixion, and the last prayer which he offered up to the Father on their behalf. You may then take the fifth, sixth, and eighth chapters of the *Epistle to the Romans*, as pointing out in a very particular manner, the two fundamental doctrines of Christianity, *justification* and *sanctification*, and their close connexion with one another, and with baq-

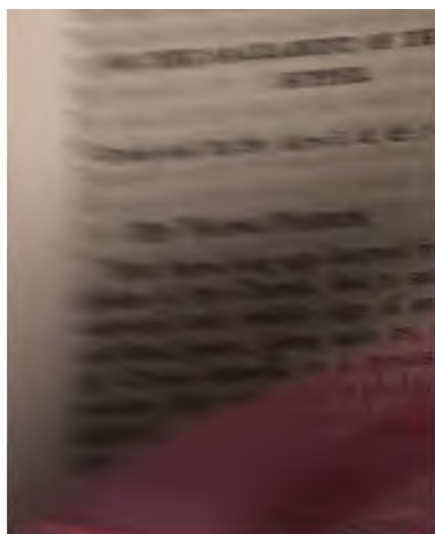
tism (Rom. vi. 3, 4); and also the twelfth and thirteenth chapters, as a beautiful compendium of Christian morality. Read these portions of Scripture carefully, and apply the knowledge of divine truth thereby acquired, to regulate the course of your self-examination, and the subject matter of your petitions in prayer.

On looking back upon the directions which I have considered it necessary to lay before you, I am so far from conceiving it possible that your reason should disapprove of any of them; that, on the contrary, I fear you will think their propriety so self-evident, as that their adoption might safely have been left to your own judgment. It is not your *judgment* that I am afraid of, but I am afraid of the natural weakness and wickedness of the human *will*: I am afraid that you may know these things without wishing to do them; that you may indulge a faint and indolent *wish* to adhere to your baptismal engagements, without ever coming to a decided *resolution* that you will do so; or, lastly, that having, in the course of preparing for confirmation, really and sincerely formed this resolution, you may, by the deceitfulness of sin, be led back into that most dangerous and ruinous state—habitual forgetfulness of God.

May God enlighten your minds to see where the danger lies, and strengthen them to avoid or to resist it: and if in any matter I have been *erroneous* or defective, may God give you

wisdom and grace to correct the error, or to supply the deficiency. But, believe me, you will not do this to any good purpose by mere natural intellect, however you may improve it, or however sedulously you may apply it to the theory of religion. I have written for a practical purpose, and you will have read these pages in vain, unless you have read them for a practical purpose also. My purpose has been to urge you to use all means to bring your *will* into conformity with your *belief*; to feel as you know you ought to feel; to act as you know you ought to act: and I now close this letter with a humble prayer, that the Almighty power of divine grace may accompany and strengthen the weakness of the instrument; that you may be preserved from indifference and hypocrisy; and that through time and through eternity you may have reason to bless God that you were invited to reconsider and repeat your baptismal covenant in the holy ordinance of Confirmation. Your affectionate Friend and Pastor,

C. H. TERROT.



thing signified, the external sacrament being a means whereby we receive the internal grace; and a pledge to assure us thereof. All the points here asserted, except the last, are so clear to every one at all acquainted with the Gospel narrative, that although writing for the younger portion of my flock, I conceive it unnecessary to offer any thing in the way of proof, further than to request you will read the texts of Scripture to which I have referred, or perhaps the entire chapters or paragraphs in which they occur. But though it be quite unnecessary to prove what is notorious, namely, that the Eucharist is a sensible representation of the sacrifice of Christ's body and blood, under the figures of bread and wine; yet it may be expedient to turn your attention to the fullness of the evidence which we possess, that this sacrament was really instituted by the Redeemer. And I do so, because this evidence goes to prove, not merely the validity and divine origin of this sacred rite, but renders the actual and general usage of the Lord's Supper a standing proof of the truth of the whole Gospel system, both as to matter of fact and matter of doctrine.

We possess, then, a clear and well-authenticated record, stating as an historical fact, that Christ died upon the cross, and that he himself frequently stated the purpose of his death to be the salvation of the world. Now, suppose any Christian who builds his hopes

upon the reality of this fact, to be tempted with doubts as to the integrity of the record; he possesses in the certain knowledge, that from a period near the assigned date of Christ's sufferings, and certainly not before, all persons professing to believe in Christ, in all parts of the world, have agreed to celebrate the Eucharist in an intentional commemoration of his death; he possesses, I say, in this undoubted and indisputable fact, the most satisfactory answer to all doubts as to the truth of the Gospel. For of all proofs of a past event, there is none so perfectly satisfactory as uniform unvarying consent, attested and supported by some uniform rite of commemoration. Thus, the rejoicings which take place among Protestants in Ireland, on the 1st of July, or on the 5th of November in this island, prove, not perhaps that a great battle was gained by King William on the banks of the Boyne in 1690, nor that a conspiracy was actually entered into to destroy the King and Parliament in 1605; but they prove a general belief to have prevailed in those years, that such events had occurred; and would go so far towards a proof of the events, even though all historical written records of them had been lost. And just in the same way the certainty that the Eucharist has been universally practised by Christians ever since the alleged date of Christ's sufferings, proves, indisputably, *that at that date a body of men in Jerusalem*

actually believed the facts of the Gospel narrative; that is, they believed to be true, facts which, if they happened at all, must have been subjected to the test of all their senses, and that in a long course of familiar and daily experience. And thus it has pleased God to establish, and to continue among us, the sacrament of the *Lord's Supper*, primarily intended for the strengthening and refreshing of our souls, and, secondarily, for a standing evidence of the truth of that Gospel narrative on which our hopes for time and for eternity are fixed. It is a singular institution—it tallies with nothing that man ever knew or imagined, except the great Gospel doctrine of the atonement; and on the faith of that atonement having been really offered and accepted, we celebrate this religious solemnity, and believe it to be instrumental to our spiritual welfare. It stands, throughout the Christian world, an abiding evidence of the original fact which it commemorates; and as certainly as the monuments and statues, which adorn our cities, prove, and will prove, to future generations, that those eminent men in whose honour they were erected, once really lived and acted; so certainly does the sacrament of the Lord's Supper convey to every right-judging mind the assurance and certain conviction, that the Gospel narrative is essentially true, and that our faith is built upon a rock which cannot be shaken.

And now, passing over all the other points, not as immaterial, but as too clear to require a proof, let me, in this letter, direct your attention to that which is the mysterious essence of the sacrament, the connexion of the sign with the thing signified; the strengthening and refreshing of our souls by the body and blood of Christ, as our bodies are by the bread and wine.

We know, then, as facts, that the Eternal Word, in human form, on a solemn occasion, broke bread and circulated a cup of wine among his Apostles, commanding them to repeat the act after he should be removed from them, "in remembrance of Him." We know that they not merely obeyed this injunction in their own persons, but likewise enjoined the practice upon all who, through their preaching, believed in Christ. And not merely were the first race of Christians taught by the inspired Apostles to communicate in the appointed emblems of Christ's body and blood; but, from occasional notices, it would appear that this communion was the main purpose for which confirmed and instructed Christians assembled together every Lord's day; "they abode steadfastly in the Apostle's doctrine, and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers." It is clearly then our duty to communicate, because it is our duty to obey the positive commands of our Lord and Master; and the wording of the command, taken

in connection with the practice of the primitive church, seems to require that our communion should be *as frequent as possible*. But God requires from us a reasonable service. An attendance at the Lord's table, merely in the way of positive duty, though it might evince a proper regard to the will of God, would shew much ignorance of what that will, with respect to us, really is. The sacrament of the Eucharist was appointed for our good; and it was chosen to effect this good, because it was suited to effect it. I have therefore now to lay before you, as briefly and simply as possible, what are the benefits which we have a right to expect from communion; how communion produces these benefits; and finally, what state of preparation in the communicant is requisite in order to render communion effectual.

The benefits to be reasonably expected from communion, are properly described in the Church catechism to be, the strengthening and refreshing of our souls by the body and blood of Christ. Now, we must observe in the first place, that the sacrifice made upon the Cross was one and all-sufficient; the work of atonement was then finished, and there remains now no sacrifice for sins, and, thank God, no necessity for a sacrifice. In one sense, and that a most important one, Christ purchased forgiveness for all men. And that sense is, that for the sake of what He did and

suffered, God is ready to forgive all who comply with the necessary conditions of *Repentance* and *Faith*; and furthermore, that God puts the ability to *repent* and *believe* within the reach of every man who hears the invitations of the Gospel. But from this statement of the universality of the purchase of forgiveness, it must immediately appear that some men only are actually forgiven; because it is only some men who repent and believe. The practical question, therefore, which each individual ought to ask in his own case, is not the question whether Christ died to purchase forgiveness for *him*, because most assuredly Christ died to purchase forgiveness for all men (1. Tim. iv. 10; Ezekiel, xxxiii. 11; 2 Peter, iii. 9; 2 Cor. v. 15); but whether by belief and repentance he has secured to himself individually an interest in all those blessings which Christ by his death purchased for all men. He then who truly and thankfully believes that Christ died for his redemption, and who truly and habitually desires to be delivered from those evil habits and tempers which alone stand in the way of the sinner's reconciliation with God, such a person is in a state of salvation, and has secured to himself an interest in the benefits of Christ's death. Thus he standeth; but at the same time, he knows how necessary it is that "he who standeth take heed lest he fall;" and he *knows* also that his stability depends upon a

diligent and conscientious use of the *means of Grace*, among the most important of which we must assuredly place the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper.

The benefit, then, to be desired in communion, is not the acquisition of a new principle, but the strengthening of some that are already formed ; and the only ones which a Christian needs to have strengthened, are his *faith* and his *repentance*. If he habitually contemplates and believes the great truth that God, for Christ's sake, is willing to pardon all sin that is repented of, and the equally great truth that He is ready to give his sanctifying Spirit to all those that sincerely ask it, so long he is safe. But then the Christian is in danger of ceasing to contemplate and believe, that is, practically to believe these things ; and it was to guard him against a relapse into indifference and unbelief, that the sacrament of the Lord's Supper was graciously instituted. And we have now to consider how it operates thus.

Our Saviour has declared generally, that "when two or three are assembled together in his name, there is He in the midst of them." As to his bodily presence, that we know is not now present in any assembly of his people upon earth ; and as to his divine presence, that we know is everywhere, and always the same. By this declaration of the Saviour, then, we can only understand, that Christ promises to act in the way of conferring spirit-

ual benefits, especially on those who are assembled in his name. And if this action may reasonably be expected by the pious attendant upon any of the social ordinances of religion, it surely may most reasonably be expected from attendance on that ordinance which alone Christ himself personally instituted. But I have already mentioned, that the communication of grace by the means of grace, is no unaccountable arbitrary result, there is no *opus operatum*, as the schoolmen call it ; but as in communicating at the Table of the Lord, we offer a reasonable service, so we look for a rational, though at the same time a supernatural result from so doing. If you keep in mind two things, 1st, that all our spiritual blessings were purchased by the death of Christ ; and 2^d, that these blessings are actually enjoyed only by those who truly believe in the merit and efficacy of that great sacrifice, you will at once perceive why this external visible solemnity should have been chosen for the strengthening and refreshing of our faith. To endeavour to abstract the mind from the influence of all sensible signs in religion, is as contrary to sound philosophy, as it is to the express declarations and provisions both of the Mosaic and the Christian covenant. God has instituted visible signs, and he has constituted the human mind such as to be more powerfully acted upon by visible signs associated with spiritual truths, than by

the bare statement or logical demonstration of those truths themselves. In the sacrament of the Lord's Supper, then, we possess visible symbols of those most sacred objects of our faith, the body and blood of Christ, broken and shed upon the cross for our salvation; and thus we have represented to us, in a lively and affecting manner, the great *fact* which forms the basis of all our religious hopes. And we not only see these symbols, but we partake of them; and they become essentially incorporated with us. We recollect that Christ has said "he that eateth my flesh and drinketh my blood, abideth in me and I in him." (John vi. 56.) We eat and drink the appointed symbols, and humbly look for the promised union, on the word of him who cannot deceive.

To every one who approaches the table of the Lord with any faith in the *thing signified*, the significance of the symbols, and the solemnity of the service, and the influence of the social and sympathetic feelings, will stimulate that faith, and naturally raise it *for a time* to a strength and ardour far beyond its usual level. But naturally that ardour will speedily fail; naturally the efficacy of the sacrament to excite it will pass away with its novelty; and it is to be feared that many, who first communicated with a deep devotional feeling, now absent themselves entirely, or communicate with formal, heartless indifference. How,

then, may we hope to escape this dead formality? By looking to grace for that which nature cannot effect; by trusting to the promise of the Saviour, and earnestly praying that it may be carried into effect in our own individual case; by looking, in short, for a supernatural efficacy in means appointed by infinite wisdom, to work that which no means can work, unless as they are blessed and assisted by almighty grace.

Communion, then, is useful to the repenting and believing sinner; and it is useful for strengthening in him the principles of repentance and belief. And this consideration may lead to some useful remarks respecting the actual state of the visible Church of Christ with reference to this ordinance. On the last Sunday of every month, the minister of Christ gives notice that on the following Sunday he purposes to administer the most comfortable sacrament of the body and blood of Christ, to all who shall be religiously and devoutly disposed to receive it; and all the congregation reverently standing listen to the invitation. But when we come to the ordinance itself, we find that comparatively few see the expediency of accepting the invitation: and that comparatively many who regularly attend the ministration of God's word, as regularly withdraw themselves from the ministration of his sacrament. And if the question were privately and *seriously* put to any of these, "Why do you,

who shew so much respect for the other ordinances of religion, shew such neglect of this most sacred and important ordinance?" I believe the answer in truth and sincerity would be, "I neglect it not; but I withdraw myself because I know or fear that I am not in a state to be benefited by communion." And it is a strange illustration of the deceitfulness of sin, that men, while they see truly and clearly the state of the case so far, should be able to shut their eyes so completely to other truths immediately and necessarily resulting from that which they see and act upon. They feel that they are not in a state to communicate profitably, because they are conscious of not possessing the requisites of faith and repentance. But, my dear young friends, if ever you should unhappily find yourselves withdrawing from the Table of the Lord on this ground, consider, I beseech you, that repentance and faith are requisite for other things besides communion. They are necessary prerequisites to the actual forgiveness of sins. Unless, therefore, you have that repentance and faith which qualify for communion, your sins are not forgiven you; you are actually under God's wrath and condemnation, as completely as if Christ had not died upon the cross; you are in such a state, that if your time of probation were this day to be cut short by one of those thousand diseases or casualties against which no care or power of

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man can guard you, the awful result must be, that you perish everlastingly. I would not judge harshly of the state of any actual or supposed absentees from the Lord's Supper ; but I would entreat them for their own sakes, to follow their own reason for their absence up to its necessary consequences. I say not of any man, that his absence is occasioned by his unfitness ; but if his own reason and conscience tell him that such is the cause, then, I say, would to God that their remonstrance proceeded further, and that it were listened to and acted upon. For surely it is a most lamentable case of infatuation, for a man coolly, and by a deliberate act, to declare himself unqualified to partake in the benefits of redemption, unfit for the hour of death, and unprepared for the day of judgment ; and then to dismiss the subject from his mind as one of second-rate importance, which may safely be deferred till any more convenient opportunity.

The scruples, then, by which some persons, not utterly destitute of religious sentiments, are withheld from communion, are to be condemned, not as superstitious, but as partial and defective. There may indeed exist scruples totally unfounded ; and a true Christian may through erroneous impressions absent himself from the Table of the Lord, for reasons which ought to bring him there more eagerly and more frequently. And this consideration leads me to the last point which I

proposed laying before you ; namely, *the nature of a due effectual preparation for worthy communion.*

Of course, the first point of preparation must be the acquisition of an adequate knowledge ; for no one can be prepared for a sacrament who is ignorant of its meaning, purposes, and effects. But passing over this, which in your case I think I have a right to take for granted, the first point of preparation must be *self-examination* as to the conformity of our wills and affections with the purposes of the sacrament. I have already observed, that it is the *strengthening*, not the *implantation* of principles, which you are to look for in communion ; and consequently the first object of enquiry must be, whether the principles which it is the purpose of the sacrament to strengthen, have been already implanted in your breasts. Those principles are *repentance* and *faith*, a steadfast purpose to lead a new life, and a lively faith in God's mercy through Christ.

It has been usual to recommend to intending communicants, and especially to those who are about to approach the Table of the Lord for the first time, a particular course of retirement, meditation, reading, and prayer. In reference to this, I would venture to say to you, that I fear any short preparation of a character totally foreign to your previous habits, and to the habits you intend to pursue afterwards, can be of little avail. To assume

for a week or for a month the external garb of severe piety, is no mark of an intention to lead a new life; nor has it, as far as I can see, any probable tendency to produce such an intention. The preparation which I am now recommending is simply a careful enquiry as to our actual state of fitness for communion. And in order to determine this, you have seriously to put the question to your own conscience, Do I so believe the Gospel, as to act in accordance with my belief? Do I feel that I have no merit whereby to deserve heaven; nay, that my sins of omission and commission have justly and necessarily incurred God's wrath and condemnation? Do I believe that the fact commemorated in the Eucharist, was the purchasing of my redemption; and do I feel in my heart a sincere desire to devote myself in grateful obedience, as "a reasonable sacrifice, holy and acceptable," to Him who gave his life a ransom for me?

Now when these questions are seriously put, the answer must be substantially to one of the three following purports. The heart of each must answer, either that whatever speculative belief he may entertain, he has no practical faith, no real gratitude, no sincere determination to live according to the rule of God's word in all things; or it may answer that he does really believe, and feel, and resolve thus, with steady consistency of purpose and of conduct; or finally, that he has

some faith, and some desire to act in accordance with his faith, but that his faith is weak, and, in consequence, his resolutions wavering.

Now those whose consciences give the first answer are manifestly unfit to approach the table of the Lord; and those whose consciences can happily give the second answer, require no further direction or exhortation from me. But in almost every part of this letter, I have imagined myself to be addressing that class whose consciences would return the third answer; and I now come to consider how communion may be rendered most useful towards the supplying of those deficiencies which they feel and regret in their religious state.

This class of persons are, as might be expected, peculiarly apt to be afflicted with doubts as to their fitness to approach the Lord's Table; and so long as they measure their fitness by their attainments in holiness, it seems impossible they should ever be satisfied that they are worthy communicants. For what can the most consistent Christian find in himself that gives him a right, by merit, "so much as to gather up the crumbs that fall from the table of his Lord?" But if, on the other hand, they remember that Christ invites, not the perfect, but "the weary and heavy laden," to come to Him, that they may find rest for their souls; if they approach the sacred symbols as qualified, not by their merits, but by a sense of their de-

iciencies; then the very circumstances which now sink their spirits, will be turned, as they ought, to animate their hopes; and their sense of their unworthiness to claim any thing as a matter of right, will yield to a joyful conviction that they may claim heaven itself as a matter of favour.

I say, then, that the first qualification for communion is a consciousness of your own unworthiness. But then I pray you, my young friends, to keep in mind, that there is a mere speculative conviction of sin, just as there is a mere speculative belief in redemption; and that the one, like the other, is dead, and profiteth nothing. The most hardened profligate is ready in full sincerity to confess himself a sinner—perhaps to triumph in the boldness of his iniquity—perhaps to claim merit for the honesty of his confession. The consciousness of sin by which you must be fitted for communion, is not the bare consciousness that you have sinned, for that must be possessed by every human being that knows the difference between right and wrong; but it is a consciousness of your own actual sinfulness, combined with some perception of the intrinsic baseness, and some dread of the dangerous consequences of sin. These are the root of true Christian repentance; and without these there can exist no true Christian faith, because till they exist, the scheme of redemption will *never appear* of sufficient importance to have

either its evidence or its contents fairly and thoroughly examined.

I have spoken, a few pages back, in somewhat disparaging terms, of a formal system of austere piety, as a preparation for communion. But I trust you will now perceive that I never meant to say, that no change need take place in the conduct of ordinary candidates for admission to the Lord's Table, except the cessation of habits of palpable criminality. He whose mind is really affected by a practical belief of the consequences of sin unrepented of, and consequently unforgiven, must be sensitively scrupulous as to the lawfulness or unlawfulness of any action that is proposed to him. He who has advanced beyond this, and who believes that he *has* repented of his sins, will not wantonly incur the necessity for renewing the sorrows of repentance, nor run the risk of losing the mediation, by renouncing the service of the Redeemer. And, finally, he whose highest hopes are built upon his faith in Christ, and who comes to communion with the desire and intention of strengthening that faith, will approach with a solemn awe, "as seeing things that are invisible;" and will abhor the impiety, and dread the consequences of intruding himself into the more immediate presence of God, in all the impurity of unrepented and unforgiven sin.

And now, my young friends, let me remind you, in conclusion, that there is no safe-

ty for man, but in a state of habitual fitness for communion ; and that he is fit, who repents him truly of his past sins ; sincerely desires to be enabled to live according to the divine law for the time to come ; and believes that God, for Christ's sake, is ready to forgive all sin. He who feels and acts thus is practically religious ; he is a Christian in deed as well as in name and profession ; he is fitted, not merely to communicate, but to live and to die," because living or dying he is the Lord's." Such is the nature of the Sacrament, to which, as Christ's minister, I invite you ; and such is the rational system of self-examination and preparation which I feel myself bound to recommend, as necessary to a profitable communion, and I may add also, as necessary to salvation. That God may give you grace to improve this highest ordinance of the Church to the full extent of its purposes of mercy, is the prayer of your faithful Friend and Pastor,

C. H. TERROT.

LETTER FOURTH.

ON THE CHURCH.

EPH. iv. 11, 12; 1 TIM. v. 17-22; TITUS i. 5.

MY YOUNG FRIENDS,

It will appear, I suspect, to many, that the subject which I now propose to lay before you, is of too trifling importance to be associated with those weightier matters which have been considered in my former Letters. I certainly do not consider it as being of equal importance with them; and yet, if the Evangelist describing the state of the early Christians, thought it not enough to say, that they abode in the Apostles' *doctrine*, but added that they abode in their *fellowship* also; it may be worth our while to consider, whether, amidst the various sects into which the Church of Christ is now unfortunately divided, there be any which possesses a fairer claim to this fellowship than others.

In pursuing this enquiry, it appears necessary to shew, in the first place, that our Saviour, when on earth, not only revealed a system of truths, but formed all those who

believed those truths, into a *society*. By a society, I mean a certain number of persons voluntarily combined together for some common purpose, subject to obligations, and enjoying privileges not shared by the rest of mankind. And as obligations can be enforced, and privileges enjoyed, only under a regular and orderly system of administration, it is necessary that every society which serves its purpose, should have certain officers to superintend and rule it. The question then is, Did our Saviour, personally, and by his Apostles, institute a visible society upon earth? That He did, is clear from the following considerations:—1. The very first generation of Christians were so closely *associated*, not merely in sameness of belief, but also in secular polity, as to have “all things in common,” (*Acts* iv. 32). 2. All the members of this association had a definite and avowed *purpose* to be effected by their church-membership, namely, the securing of their salvation, (*Acts* ii. 47.) 3. This society had a distinct *mark of initiation*, by which each of its members was distinguished from all the rest of mankind, namely, the sacrament of baptism, (*Acts* ii. 41.) 4. It had *exclusive privileges*; such as the promises of Christ’s special presence, and aids of the Spirit, the use of the Lord’s Supper, and other means of grace, and the promise of eternal salvation conditional upon *the proper use* of these, (*Acts* ii. 38, 39;

Eph. ii. 19-22.) 5. It had *proper officers* for the maintenance of its polity, and the furtherance of its purpose; namely, Christ himself, "the High Priest of our profession," the Apostles appointed by him personally, and then the ministers of different ranks appointed by them and their successors, (*Eph. i. 22; iv. 11.*)

There can then be no doubt but that all professed believers in Christ, did in the first age of Christianity constitute a society called the Church; and we have now to consider what has been the fate of this society in the period between the primitive age and our own. That the same society which had been founded in the Apostolic age, continued, without interruption or violent alteration, to subsist in the next century, is clear from the undoubted records of antiquity, especially from the remains of those writers usually denominated the Apostolic Fathers. If you wish to acquire an accurate knowledge of the evidence on this head, I would send you to the second chapter of Mr. Sinclair's First Dissertation on Episcopacy. But as the continuity of a society is best proved by proving the regular succession of its officers, I shall transcribe from that Dissertation a remarkable passage there quoted from the writings of Tertullian, the earliest of the Latin Fathers; and as the date is an important matter in this enquiry, you must bear in mind that the passage was written about one hundred

years after the death of the last surviving Apostle. He is speaking of the heretics of that time, and says — “ Let them shew us the origin of their Churches ; let them unrol a catalogue of their Bishops, from the earliest to the latest, by which their first Bishop may appear to have had for his founder and immediate predecessor, either some Apostle or some Apostolic person, living in the time of the Apostles. For this is the established mode in which the Apostolic Churches count up their pedigree. The church of Smyrna, for example, counts up to Polycarp, appointed by St. John ; the church of Rome to Clement, ordained by St. Peter ; so in like manner the other churches produce their first Bishops apostolically constituted, that by them the apostolic succession might be propagated and continued.” Here you see that a writer of high credit informs us, that the several churches at the end of the second century were well convinced, and had written evidence to prove, that they had continued as uninterrupted societies, ever since the time of the Apostles. After this the historical evidences are so numerous and explicit, that no one has been found bold enough to suggest the probability of any break in the continuance of the Church as a society, down to the time of the Reformation. During this long period, and as appears from the extract, at the time of Tertullian, and, as we learn from Scripture, in the Apostolic age itself, *there were heretics and schismatics.* By He-

retics we understand persons whose belief is opposed to the truth as revealed in Scripture ; by Schismatics, those who separate themselves from the Church, considered as a society, by breaking its rules and disobeying its officers. No specific heresy had, however, formed itself into an abiding society ; and the only extensive schism which, at the time of the Reformation, existed in the visible Church, was the division between the Greek and Latin portions of it.

Throughout western Europe, then, and we may say throughout the far greater part of Christendom, there existed an *apparent* unity upon all matters both of doctrine and of discipline. But in allowing this, we must remember that for some time previous to Luther, very strong measures had been found necessary, in order to insure this apparent unity ; and that men were kept from what the rulers of the Church chose to consider heresy and schism, at least as much by the fear of offending against the Inquisition, as by the fear of sinning against God.

At the Reformation, however, as you all know, a very great change took place. The great change which had previously taken place in the intellectual character of Europe by the invention of printing, and the restoration of Greek literature, rendered necessary some alteration in the religious system. The absurdities which, in so many centuries of ignorance

and barbarism, had been accumulated round the fair edifice of Christ's Church, could no longer be tolerated by an age comparatively enlightened; and consequently the Reformation took place. Had men been allowed at this crisis to follow the convictions of reason and conscience, the results might have been very different; but, unfortunately, temporal policy and religious intolerance threw the sword into the scale, and men were brought to judge of the most important spiritual questions in the spirit of party, and with all their malignant passions in active operation.

The result then was, that the larger and richer portion of Europe adhered to the superstitions of popery, and to the whole system of ecclesiastical polity as then subsisting; that another portion, abjuring these superstitions, still adhered to the fundamental articles of the Christian faith, but reconstructed the Church as a society; while a third portion reformed their polity as they had done their doctrine, by merely throwing away what was false or superfluous in each; but scrupulously abstained from breaking the continuous unity of the Church. To this last portion we adhere; and as we constitute the smallest of the three divisions of Christendom, it is the more incumbent upon us to be ready to give a reason for adhering to that middle line which our fathers adopted, as most agreeable both to truth and to expediency.

If, then, my young friends, you should be asked by a member of the Church of Rome, why your fathers broke the unity of the Church by seceding from the general communion of Christians at the period of the Reformation, I would advise you not to account for, but to deny the fact. They—I speak of the English Reformers—set up no new order of ecclesiastical government. They found that the Church in general, though built upon the foundation of the prophets and apostles, had been overwhelmed by a mass of heterogeneous rubbish; and this rubbish they knew it to be their duty to clear away. Nor was the fundamental reason which forced them into reformation any minute scruple of over-nice consciences, any matter of standing or of kneeling, of organs or surplices. That of which they had to reform the public services of the Church was *idolatry*; not so much the material idolatry of image worship, as the crime of “worshipping and serving the creature more than the creator;” and of setting up a thousand sainted mediators in the place of that “one Mediator whom God hath appointed between God and man, the man Christ Jesus,” (1 Tim. ii. 5.) In reforming herself, the Church of Christ in England used her Christian liberty, and performed her Christian obligations; and the guilt of separation lies with those who excommunicated her for her return to primitive purity of doctrine.

If you are asked, on the other hand, why

they made so imperfect a use of the liberty they had attained, and remained so far behind the rest of Europe in the extent of their reforms, you may answer, that our fathers went upon the principle of changing nothing which they could conscientiously retain. They believed that the Church as a society had been instituted by Christ himself; and as it still existed, they did not acknowledge in themselves or in others a right to form a new association. They believed that the laws of this society had been vitiated, its obligations altered, its privileges abridged; and therefore they believed that it was not merely their right, but their bounden duty to do their utmost towards restoring it to its original purity. But they never imagined they had a commission to form a new society, such as their notions of expediency might dictate; original purity was the object, and it was also the limit of their reforms. Thus they threw off the paramount authority of the Bishop of Rome, because they knew it to be an usurpation; but they retained the order of Bishops, because they knew it to be of Apostolic institution.

Such, my young friends, was the principle upon which the Church of which we have the blessing to be members was reformed. Ours is no modern association. We ground our faith, not upon the acts of Henry or Edward, *but upon the Acts of the Apostles*; and we

acknowledge no birthday of our Church subsequent to that on which our Saviour commissioned his Apostles to "go and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost." We acknowledge all baptized persons as members of Christ's visible Church; but we are forced to perceive that some of these have unwarrantably departed from the Apostles' doctrine, and that others have unwarrantably broken up that society which the Apostles described as the body of Christ, undivided and indivisible. I say not these things in order that you may condemn either sects or persons who differ from us as schismatical. If I thought there were any tendency to such a spirit among you, I would say, "who art thou that judgest another man's servant?" But I say them, in order to satisfy you of the stability of the ground on which you stand as Episcopalian Protestants; and to arm you against arguments which, as the world now stands, I cannot flatter myself you will escape being assailed with. You will probably meet with zealous and conscientious persons, some of whom will urge that there is no salvation out of the communion of Rome; others that the only true church is some little society founded the other day; and others, that there does not exist, nor ever existed, such a thing as a visible Church of Christ upon earth. I do not mean to arm you with

weapons to combat the arguments of such persons ; for this you can be qualified only by a careful study of the ecclesiastical history of the first centuries. But I trust that the considerations I have been laying before you will serve to secure you from the effect of vague assertion and declamation, either against our ecclesiastical polity, or in favour of any other. And that you should be secured from this effect is, I think, a matter of no small importance : for where there does exist a conscientious regard for religion, it is deeply to be regretted that it should be wasted on the unprofitable task of choosing a church.

Being satisfied, then, that the religious society in which God's providence has placed you, is really a branch of the society founded by Christ, and to which He committed the dispensation of his word and sacraments ; keep in view, I beseech you, that the object for which this society was instituted, was the training up for heaven of " a peculiar people, zealous of good works." Whether our church be apostolic or schismatic ; whether its doctrines be orthodox or heretical ; whether its liturgy be edifying or delusive, are questions intrinsically of great importance, but of very little importance to the man who has no sincere desire to attain personally the objects for which the Church itself was instituted. That purpose was sanctification, the bringing of man's affections into conformity with

the revealed will of God ; which conformity is and must be the highest perfection of every created being. And as we know that the Church consists of two portions, one glorified in heaven, the other militant upon earth, we therefore pray daily that the will of God may be done on earth as it is in heaven : that is to say, that the means of grace may be used so as to effect the purposes of grace ; that all baptized persons may keep steadily in view the nature and consequences of their baptismal covenant ; that the sacrament of the Lord's Supper may neither be profanely rejected, nor carelessly and formally attended, but with sincere repentance and hearty faith ; that thus there may daily be less and less distinction between the ideas of the *visible* and *spiritual* Church ; and that the society now educating for heaven may daily be more and more fitted for admission to their eternal inheritance. That such may be the progress of Christ's universal Church on earth, and of you, my young friends, as individual members of it, is the sincere prayer of your Friend and Pastor,

C. H. TERROT.

